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ABSTRACT

This guide is the sixth in a series of eleven generated in 1978 as the result of workshops that focused on peer training, a different approach to teaching. The workshops provided the opportunity for members of eleven identified role groups to work together with peers to examine the relationship between their specific role group and community education and the ways in which they could stimulate their peers to improve role performance and effectiveness. This booklet focuses on community education as seen by coordinators of programs. Topics considered include characteristics of building level coordinators, responsibilities, steps in program development, and evaluation. An extensive section on training strategies discusses professional development of coordinators, communications, and interaction between higher education agencies and practitioners. (Author/LD)

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BUILDING LEVEL COORDINATORS/DIRECTORS AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Role Guide Series #6

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PREFACE

This booklet is a result of two three-day Role Training and Peer Interaction Academies which were held in 1978 and funded by a training grant from the U.S. Office of Education, Community Education Program. The format for both Academies was designed to focus upon peer training, a method which has proven to be a useful teaching and information sharing approach. The sessions provided the opportunity for members of eleven identified role groups to work together with peers to examine in-depth:

a) the relationship between their specific role group and community education, and

b) the ways in which they could stimulate their peers to improve role performance and effectiveness.

Material development phases were interwoven with both structured and unstructured problem-solving activities. The follow-up activities and publications of the Role Guide Series were made possible from grants by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Through a sharing of information, all participants gained knowledge. The information shared in this booklet is intended for use both by experienced individuals and those just entering the field. The booklet can help the experienced individual to become more aware of additional aspects of the role and of directions being taken by others. It can assist the novice in gaining an overview of the role as seen by those who have worked in this capacity. The information also can be used as a means for guiding others in the community to gain a better understanding of the role and its relationship to community education.

AS BUILDING LEVEL COORDINATORS, WE BELIEVE

We believe that there is rising public insistence that all levels of government become more responsive to citizen needs and desires.

We believe that there is a limited amount of tax monies and other human and physical resources available to meet public demands for facilities, programs, and services.

We believe that full utilization of existing public facilities, programs, and services is a desirable community goal.

We believe that the energy crisis and other related developments point up an increasing need for all governmental units and related public service organizations to mobilize their respective resources for the common purpose of improving the quality of community life.

We believe that local communities have facilities, equipment, and staff organized for the purpose of providing opportunities for life-long learning.

We believe that other related public and private community organizations provide programs and services for community betterment.

We believe that no single, cohesive, coordinated strategy for the development and utilization of all these relevant community resources has yet been established.

We believe that there are great potential social and economic benefits to be derived from further cooperation in facility and program development for the benefit of all citizens through a comprehensive community education program at the local level.

Introduction

The role of a community education coordinator/director* can encompass a wide range of responsibilities and duties, including serving as a teacher, a counselor, an organizer, an administrator, a supervisor, a salesman, a leader, a communicator, and a human relations worker within the community.

Ideally, the purpose and overall goal of the community education coordinator is to be a catalystic agent for bringing about a spirit of unity on the part of the community and for helping people realize the great potential they have within themselves for recognizing and solving their own problems. In the practical terms of day-to-day operation, the coordinator works with the community, school system, and service agencies in the areas of need identification and program planning.

In both the long and short range view of the role, it is important to note that the coordinator is a facilitator of a process, not an administrator of programs. The coordinator acts as a change agent/activator/resource coordinator in the community and becomes the catalyst which assists the various segments of a community to organize to achieve agreed upon goals. The individual accepting a coordinator's position must assume the responsibility of becoming familiar with the power structure of the community (both formal and informal), the function and status of the many

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*Titles may vary from community to community. The term "community education coordinator" will be used throughout to refer to the building level coordinator, who is sometimes also called the community school director or community service facilitator, etc.

agencies (both civic and service), and the needs of all members of the total community and must accept the challenge to help mold these various elements together to strengthen the quality of all aspects of life for every individual and for the community as a whole.

Viewed from their perspective as facilitators and change agents, the coordinators drafted the following definition of community education.

> "Community Education is a process which seeks to provide a comprehensive and coordinated delivery system of educational, recreational, social, and cultural services as well as opportunities for continued growth and development of individuals, families, and communities."

It should be noted that the building level coordinators/directors participants at the Academies were dealing with primarily a school-based program. They noted several advantages associated with a school-based program. These advantages included the availability of personnel, materials and the building facility; the community identification with the school; and the fact that the school serves as a non-political entity within the community. However, the coordinators viewed a jointly-operated program (school and agencies) as having the additional advantages of a broader financial support base and the possible further reduction or elimination of unnecessary duplicated services. The possible complications in communication and coordination were seen as hurdles to be overcome rather than barriers that would block progress.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A BUILDING LEVEL COORDINATOR

The building level coordinator views himself/herself as a person who must work cooperatively with a variety of community members in all situations. Because communities and situations are different, the identification of skills, competencies, and personal characteristics of coordinators is an area of much discussion. Studies have been conducted to determine those particular qualities necessary to be an effective community education coordinator. Over the past few years, listings of competencies and characteristics have been generated by researchers and practitioners. The competencies identified as essential by coordinators at the Academies were:

1. Communication
2. Decision making
3. Operation (management and programming)
4. Human/public relations
5. Problem solving/planning
6. Evaluation

They also agreed that coordinators must have the following personal characteristics:

1. Warmth, understanding, and tolerance for differences
2. Receptiveness
3. Sensitivity
4. Loyalty
5. Enthusiasm and commitment
6. Patience and persistance
7. Good health and neat personal appearance

The degree to which each of these personal characteristics and competencies is present will influence the effectiveness of the coordinator as a facilitator.

The backgrounds of those in community education coordinator positions are extremely varied with training ranging from Master's Degree at the university level to "on-the-job" training and "learn as you go" experiences. The question of certification and training is an important issue among coordinators. Most states presently have no certification requirements or guidelines for hiring. Coordinators feel that requirements should be set and that the requirements should be based upon competencies, rather than on degrees or teaching certificates. They believe that if certification is to become a reality and to serve the best interests of the community, it must take into account the skills, abilities, and personal qualities needed to facilitate an effective relationship with the community to be served.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The role of the community education coordinator in a community and the responsibilities assumed will be dependent upon the job description, the goals, and the objectives of the program. The majority of activities will be either administrative in nature or will deal with the community education process (facilitative functions).

The following is a list of the major responsibilities which emerged in the coordinators role group discussion.

1. Communication: The coordinator utilizes effective communication skills in:

   a. Disseminating ideas and information for/to the community.
   b. Conducting public relations activities through media and personal communication.
   c. Facilitating collaborative efforts.
   d. Receiving and sharing individual, group, and community ideas.
   e. Maintaining open lines of communication with staff and support persons.
   f. Establishing mutually beneficial relationships among agencies.
   g. Coordinating programming efforts among agencies to avoid duplication and reduce competition.

2. Learning Facilitator: The coordinator functions as a learning facilitator by:

   a. Maximizing opportunities for citizen leadership and involvement.
   b. Developing procedures for effecting individual, family, and community change through involvement.

c. Employing processes for involving individuals, groups, agencies, and institutions in effecting community change.
d. Developing group interaction skills.

3. Administration - The coordinator accepts responsibility for:

a. Developing a budget and a financial plan to insure that financial considerations (overhead, salaries, publicity, etc.) are met.
b. Determining, in cooperation with the community advisory council, the scope of program activities as well as goals and objectives for future programming based on community input.
c. Organizing, supervising, and evaluating program staff (developing job descriptions, interviewing, hiring, and training).
d. Supervising building and equipment use to insure smooth, effective operation of activities.
e. Developing techniques and a management process.
f. Knowing, interpreting, and incorporating the policies of the agency which the coordinator is representing.
g. Working with principal/staff in programming and operation of programs.
h. Identifying sources of potential revenue and initiating grant procedures.

4. Program Development: The coordinator's function as a program developer centers around assisting in:

a. Conducting needs assessment/evaluation (both formal and informal).
b. Conducting resource identification, assessment, and involvement.
c. Facilitating program design, implementation, and coordinated delivery.

d. Recognizing the autonomy of existing services and programs within the community.

5. Professional Development: The coordinator continuously must develop his/her professional competencies through:

   a. Reading professional materials.
   b. Attending and contributing to professional workshops and conferences.
   c. Providing in-service training opportunities for staff, advisory council members, and others involved in community education efforts in the community.
   d. Participating in staff development being carried out for others in the community.

Possessing the recommended skills and characteristics and having identified his/her responsibilities, the community education coordinator can begin to develop and implement the community education process within the community. To a high degree, the leadership assumed by the coordinator in meeting the responsibilities will affect the program's level of success.

PROGRAM/PROCESS DEVELOPMENT*

The steps taken in developing a program are difficult to prioritize because they depend on the community, the coordinator's knowledge of that community, and the political and financial situation. With a logical and sequential progression of activities that build upon each other and that reflect the needs and wants of the community, a program can be developed and implemented which will serve the community. Coordinators have identified a list of activities that can serve as a process and product-orientation guideline for development:

1. Identify and meet on an informal basis with community and agency leaders and school personnel,

2. Increase community leadership's and school staff's awareness and understanding of community education concepts,

3. Establish community task force/advisory board,

4. Conduct informal assessment of needs by task force,

5. Develop mini-programs to address initial identified needs,

6. Evaluate classes and activities on a continual basis,

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*"Program" is used in the broad sense to include the total effort, service, activities, coordination, collaboration and other elements. The term is not synonomous with classes.

7. Implement a formal needs assessment process,

8. Plan and implement a program based on diagnosis of survey results and community resources, and

9. Evaluate program formally and modify where needed.

The path to program development and implementation is not always smooth. The most often mentioned problem is that of communication -- both the use of media for communicating directly to the community members and the personal ability to communicate effectively on a verbal, one-to-one basis or in front of a group.

Other problems identified as being common to many coordinators' programs include:

1. Protection of territory/clients served among state and local agencies and educational institutions (turfism).

2. Lack of financial resources.

3. Lack of understanding of the role of the coordinator in a school-based operation by school and agency personnel.

4. Apathy and/or lack of support in the school and/or segments of community.

Strategies for solving these problems depend on the personal strengths of a coordinator but they usually employ both communication and human relation skills. The strategies suggested for communicating with the community-wide population are ones which have proven effective for a number of coordinators. They include:

1. Establishment of an inter-agency task force to serve as a sounding board and to disseminate information.

2. Establishment of an effective and on-going promotion campaign through all available resources of media (television, radio, newspaper, newsletters, flyers, promotion brochures).

3. Establishment of awareness sessions in the community and school by advisory council members.

EVALUATION

The area of evaluation is receiving increased attention. In most community education programs, the coordinator is asked to provide on-going evaluation of staff (professional and volunteer), facilities, activities/projects, contribution of cooperating agencies, development and implementation processes, the advisory council, and budget/finance. Unfortunately, evaluation is an area in which many coordinators have had little or no training.

Most coordinators recognize the need to have training and assistance in this area. They agree that the purpose of each evaluation effort must be understood before any meaningful evaluation plan can be developed. The reason for conducting any evaluation should be clear because it determines the information to be collected and the manner in which results are to be used.

Coordinators generally believe that the purposes of evaluation include:

1. Monitoring the progress of the program toward reaching goals and objectives.

2. Assessing the quality of professional and volunteer staff.

3. Determining strategies for setting program directions or modifying existing procedures based on evaluation results.

4. Insuring that the community education program is client and cost effective (an increasingly important element for a program's success).

TRAINING STRATEGIES

Many coordinators are hired because they possess skills and abilities developed in other fields which are of value in community education. Often they have little or no training specifically in community education. In many states, preparation programs through higher education are not available; and even where formal programs are available, there remains a need for in-service training which provides practical, job-related experiences and activities. The development of plans to provide on-going training allows the coordinator to acquire needed skills and competencies and to up-date and improve others.

The most useful training strategy is one in which the participant is involved in discussions and experiences designed to develop skills in program development, program design, planning and management, and interpersonal relations. These activities, when conducted in small group sessions with a resource leader, should provide active involvement rather than passive listening. The "peer training" concept has proven valuable because it enables the individual coordinator to participate in problem solving and idea sharing with others in the same field who, most likely, are encountering the same types of problems and experiences. In peer training, a high degree of reinforcement is achieved, and coordinators are able to clarify their roles in community education through continued dialogue and discussion with other practitioners.

The following need areas were identified and strategies were developed to meet them:

1. Professional development
2. Communication
3. Interaction among higher education agencies and practitioners

I. Professional development

A. Objectives

1. To develop and maintain skills that are necessary for the effective functioning of the coordinator in the community education process.

2. To create an awareness among community education coordinators that continued training is necessary for a viable community education process.

3. To develop a process for greater opportunities for personal and individual training in community education.

4. To provide diverse training experiences for community education coordinators in the areas of community leadership, staff exchanges, teaming (rookies and veterans), and in-service activities.

5. To provide in-service workshops and seminars focusing on predetermined needs of coordinators.

B. Activities and Tasks

1. On-site visitation - It was recommended that institutions of higher education and state education agencies with centers for community education should provide assistance for local community education coordinators to visit other community education programs in operation.

2. Staff exchanges - community education coordinators should exchange on-site visits to develop insights and understanding of other community education

operations. These exchanges could consist of varying time frames.

3. Supervision of "rookie" interns - New community education coordinators should be teamed with veteran coordinators for a period of time in order to develop a better understanding of the day-to-day operations of community education.

4. On-going staff development - A staff strategy should be developed to provide for continued renewal and updating of community education coordinator skills. This could be a formal or informal in-service process as need dictates.

5. Workshops and seminars - Workshops and seminars should be developed at local, state, and regional levels regarding specific needs of coordinators as determined through an assessment instrument. These experiences should, in some cases, be exclusively for coordinators while others should provide interaction between coordinators and those in other roles such as principals, superintendents, directors, agency personnel, and lay citizens.

6. Community interaction and getting acquainted with community leaders - Community education coordinators should spend varying amounts of time with community and professional opinion leaders on a continuing basis.

C. Resources needed

1. Receptive community education department and director

2. List of local opinion leaders

3. List of state or regional community education coordinators and community education programs

4. Technical assistance from a community education center for on-going staff development

5. Local community education library resources

6. Access to professional literature (updated)

D. Time Frame - Open-ended (continued maintenance)

E. Potential pitfalls

1. Lack of cooperation for training on the part of community education director or central office staff

2. Lack/limited finances

3. Uncooperative staff/administration

4. Closed community leadership

5. Lack of understanding of the community education process

6. Time conflicts/inflexible schedules

II. Communication

A. Objectives

1. To develop a process for disseminating materials among coordinators

2. To disseminate community education materials designed by coordinators

3. To provide opportunities for dialogue among coordinators

4. To design and implement a multi-media training approach

5. To develop a written or taped informational exchange system among coordinators.

B. Activities

1. Coordinator's newsletter

2. Multi-media training package designed and implemented by coordinators with expertise in the field

3. Directory of coordinators with a list of special competencies and special programs

4. Sharing community education materials

C. Resources needed

1. Coordinator committee to edit and print newsletter

2. Multi-media equipment and film development

3. Consumable supplies, office supplies, postage

4. Budget (private foundations, business and industry, local school systems might be sources)

5. Higher education community education centers

6. State departments

7. Local public school institutions

D. Time frames

1. Newsletter - continuous

2. Sharing materials - immediately

3. Multi-media training package - one year for development

E. Potential pitfalls

1. Lack of funds for multi-media

2. Lack of needed equipment available on local level

3. Lack of facilitator for initiating suggested communications package

III. Interaction among higher education agencies and practitioners

A. Objectives

1. To expand knowledge of the community education coordinator roles in the field of community education and related areas

2. To provide an arena in an academic atmosphere for the input of practical experiences in community education

3. To increase interaction (dialogue) between the academicians (theory) and the community educator in the field (practitioner)

B. Activities

1. Completing formalized university credit course

2. Supervising community education interns

3. Participating in curriculum development and revisions

4. Serving as a resource person and/or instructor in a university

5. Encouraging the development of a certificate or degree program in community education

C. Resources

1. Institutions of higher education

2. Professional associations

3. Model programs

D. Time frame - continuous

E. Potential pitfalls

1. Legitimizing university programs

2. Lack of cooperation with higher education institutions

3. Lack of student/community interest in the field

4. Lack of funds

5. Unresponsive bureaucracy

FUTURE DIRECTION

Several interrelated factors will influence the future direction of community education. Prominent among these factors are the quality of the professionals, the cooperative efforts of agencies and, perhaps most important, the level of community involvement.

All persons involved in implementing the concept must be concerned about the roles, competencies, and attitudes of the professionals in the field. Future planning must include better training for the coordinator who daily faces broad and varied tasks. Successfully carrying out tasks, such as conducting needs assessments and evaluations, requires specific technical skills which many coordinators do not have. Trainers of professionals must become increasingly aware of these training needs and must assist in implementing strategies to overcome deficiencies. Additionally, emphasis must be placed on defining clearly the basic skills and characteristics needed by coordinators so that competent persons may be identified more readily. The concept of peer training appears to be extremely beneficial in this area and coordinators welcome future opportunities to plan, develop, and implement training packages designed to assist those who serve in that role.

A second factor likely to influence future directions is that of agency cooperation. The increasing emphasis on the efficient use of resources is viewed by coordinators as an added impetus for agencies to come together to cooperate and share resources. Collaborative efforts often result in broader-based financial support, expanded services, less duplication, and increased cost effectiveness. Studies which point to the benefits derived from community education by the community, the school, and agencies will aid in securing interagency cooperation.

Greater cooperation among agencies also will result in less emphasis on "turfs." Consequently, new cooperative models of community education are likely to emerge in which the educational institution is not the coordinating vehicle in a community education program. The role of sponsorship - whether by school systems, parks and recreation boards or another agency - must become less important and the emphasis must be placed on the services provided.

Regardless of the progress made by professional community educators and agencies, the dominant factor in the future direction of community education rests in community involvement. Recognizing this fact, coordinators recommend that a task force or advisory committee be established in every community to provide leadership and to facilitate community input in the decision-making process. One of the coordinator's major responsibilities must be to promote citizen involvement and to assist in developing leadership skills among community members.

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